[Botsford]

[W15080?]

Typed [good?]

Typed 1-10-39 Francis Donovan

Thomaston, Conn.

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I am on my way to Mr. Botsford's house, but I meet [?] him coming out of the postoffice. “Still out working?” he inquires, and without waiting for an answer, he says: “I'm going [?] down to spend the afternoon with Barney Lynch.

“There was something I wanted to tell you, but I can't remember to save my life what it was. Maybe I'll think of it later. You getting anything out of all this stuff I been telling you?”

I assure him that his recollections are furnishing me with much material. He says: “By the way, what are you telling 'em about me? I don't want anything personal about me put in no book. I don't want [?] people to be able to pick up a book and read a few pages and say ‘That's Art Botsford,’ and have a good laugh over it. I don't mind tellin' you as much as I can about old times, but I don't want nothing personal in it.”

I assure him that he will be entirely unrecognizable, and that there is no attempt to [?] delineate his character “as is.” Mr. Botsford has a fierce New England pride, [?] the dignity of one who has spent his life in honest toil, has paid his debts and has always been held in high regard, and the thought has apparently occurred to him that he is being placed under glass for the delectation of strangers, and what is worse, for the knowing inspection of friends and neighbors. [C. B. Conn.?]

“I been mailin' a few Christmas cards,” he continues. “I got quite a few already but I didn't get none this afternoon. No, I don't get my mail delivered. I got my own box. Had it for 50 years, and I didn't give it up when they put the mail delivery in. I got in the habit of [?] comin' down [?] for the mail years ago, and it's hard to get out of.

“Well, come up and see me anyway. Whether you want information or not. I like to get visitors.” 2 In the fire house, Mr. MacCurrie, [?] apparently the last of the old guard who has not succumbed in one way or the other to the rigors of winter, is occupied with the paper as usual. His perusal of the news each afternoon is a rite which is not to be disturbed with impunity, as other members of the [clique?] have discovered. So I wait until he lays it aside. [?] Eventually he does so, with the remark: “What to you think of that mess down in Bridgeport?” (He refers to the McKesson & Robbins expose)

“Do you think they'll find politicians mixed up in it?” he asks.

“'Twouldn't surprise me if they did. I think those fellas can smell money. Wherever there's a money mess, you're bound to find politicians mixed up in it.

Having delivered himself of this opinion Mr. MacCurrie is silent. Not nearly so verbose as some of his companions, Mr. MacCurrie requires considerable priming before warming to a subject. But he is something of a philosopher and is capable [??] upon occasion of profundities beyond [?] the depth of his more garrulous friends. For example his characterization of [?] prohibition, as “the by-product of war hysteria.”

I ask him about his as daily walk.

“I didn't go very far today,” says he. “Too dommed cold. A good day to be out [choppin'?] wood.”

I ask him if he did much of it in his younger days.

“Not much,” says he. “I did it for Plume and Atwood for a while. They used to use wood exclusive. No coal at all. Used wood for everything. They had their own lots, and they used to contract for it besides.

“It was dommed hard work. They paid 65 cents a cord for it. Of course in those days, a dollar and a half a day was the average factory pay. You try to get anyone to chop wood for 65 cents a cord today.

“Some'll tell you about choppin' five or six or seven cords, but believe me, three or four was a good days' work. I chopped mostly chestnut, 3 the woods used to be full of it around here. It was soft wood, and that was the kind they wanted for the muffles. Used to be a hell of a nuisance to get wood over in the yard at Plume and Atwood, and have to sort out the soft and the hard. You'd get maybe four or five hard pieces out of a cord, and you'd have to sort it all through to find them.”

Mr. MacCurrie pears out the window nearsightedly, trying to identify an elderly man [?] walking down the street. “By God,” he says, “If that don't look like old Dosky.” (Once the town bootlegger.) “That ain't him is it? No, I see it ain't. He hasn't been around here in years.” Mr. MacCurrie likes his “nip” and much of his conversation is along liquid lines.

“Dosky wasn't a bad fella,” says he, “even if some of his stuff wasn't so good. He had his faults, but he wasn't all bad. I saved his hide once.

“They had him [?] arrested on suspicion and they were lookin' for somebody to testify against him. Dan Sanger the cop came over after me. They knew Dosky had done [?] me a dirty trick one time, and they figured I'd testify against him.

“I told Dan I wouldn't appear, so he says, 'Well, Andrew, if we have to we'll get out a subpoena for you.' I says, 'If that's the way it is, I suppose I better go.'

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“When I got in court, Dosky was there, and his head was hangin' pretty low. He saw me come in and he give up hope entirely. He figured I'd testify against him, you see.

“George Gibbons, the prosecutor, he says to me, 'Did you ever buy liquor [?] from this man?' I says [?] ‘No, I didn't.’ Dosky looked up and began to smile. It was the last thing he expected to hear. It was the last thing George Gibbons expected to hear, too. He looked at me, and he says, ‘Do you know the value of your oath?’ 4 “I says, 'Just as well as you do, George.'

“They had to let Dosky go. That was one time I perjured myself, for many's the pint I bought off Dosky. But I never felt bad about it. It wasn't a hangin' matter, one way or the other.

“What time does it say up there? Must be pretty near supper time. I don't need any clock to tell me that. I don't eat lunch, you [?] see. I eat a good hearty breakfast and a big supper. Two meals a day's enough when a man gets my age, and [?] doesn't work hard. All you need is enough to keep the old [machine?] goin'—no sense in stokin' it.”